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SUBJECT: AK PARTY IN A PARLIAMENTARY LANDSLIDE: CLOSE TO A TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY

REF: A. ANKARA 7726

[B.](#) ANKARA 7713

[C.](#) ANKARA 7697

[D.](#) ANKARA 7683

[E.](#) ANKARA 7682

[¶](#)1. Summary: Justice and Development (AK) Party's landslide victory and Establishment standard-bearer Republican People's Party's (CHP) distant second-place finish in Turkey's Nov. 3 general elections cuts the number of parties in parliament back to only two for the first time in decades. While P.M. Ecevit and Kemalist pundits professed shock at the results, a varied spectrum of other commentators and leading businessmen made balanced and forward-looking assessments. End summary.

[¶](#)2. AK Party has won big (reftels). With more than 94% of votes tabulated, AK's 34.1% of the vote will give it more than 360 of the 550 seats, CHP's 19.2% will give it about 176 seats, and there will be nine independent M.P.'s under the complex proportional system currently in effect. At 0200 local on Nov. 4 AK vice chairman Mercan told us that according to AK's calculations, the party is only two seats shy of the 367 seat (two-thirds) majority it would need to be able to meet one of AK leader Erdogan's campaign pledges -- to amend and democratize the 1982 constitution, drafted under the direction of the Turkish military. Mercan opined that AK might reach 367 as results are clarified; unofficial final seat distribution will be clearer later the morning of Nov. 4.

[¶](#)3. All three parties in the current coalition government -- whose cabinet will remain in caretaker status until AK forms a government -- failed to cross the 10% threshold. P.M. Ecevit's DSP was obliterated with 1.3% of the vote; in 1999 it got 22%. ANAP fell to 5.2% from 13% in 1999. MHP only managed to reach 8.5%, less than half the 18% it got in 1999, which led party chairman Bahceli to the step -- unusual in Turkish politics -- of accepting responsibility for the failure and announcing he will not run again for the party leadership in 2003.

[¶](#)4. Tansu Ciller's DYP, the principal opposition party in the just-ended session of parliament, made a close run at the threshold but appears to have fallen just a half percentage point short. Islamist Saadet Party, which had also been in vocal opposition in the last parliament, garnered only 2.6%. Pro-Kurdish DEHAP failed to reach the threshold but in winning 6.3% improved significantly over its predecessor HADEP's 1999 showing. Motorola deadbeat Cem Uzan's upstart Genc Party, which many had worried would make it into parliament, tallied only 7.3%.

[¶](#)5. The numbers show that (1) 45% of the votes cast will not be represented in the new parliament because they went to parties unable to cross the threshold; (2) upwards of 60% of the vote went to non-Establishment parties; (3) the traditional center-right parties, which have dominated Turkish politics for generations, got only 15% of the vote.

[¶](#)6. P.M. Ecevit and like-minded opinion-makers, who had raised the spectre of a "regime crisis" if AK were to win, expressed dismay at the size of AK's victory. However, a varied spectrum of commentators, from Nazli Ilicak (formerly both doyenne of the center-right press and an M.P. with the now-closed Islamist Fazilet Party) to reform-minded captains of industry Sakip Sabanci and Cem Boyner, publicly underscored (1) the legitimacy of the results; and (2) AK's standing as a party of the center. Nazli Ilicak also interpreted the result as reflecting Turkish voters' aspirations for the kind of equilibrium that a one-party government in a two-party parliament can provide.

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